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Ó Domhnaill Abú

O'Donnell Clan

Newsletter No. 24

Winter 1996

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES

The refurbished and refurnished Great Hall of Donegal Castle.

Countess Irene Montjoye

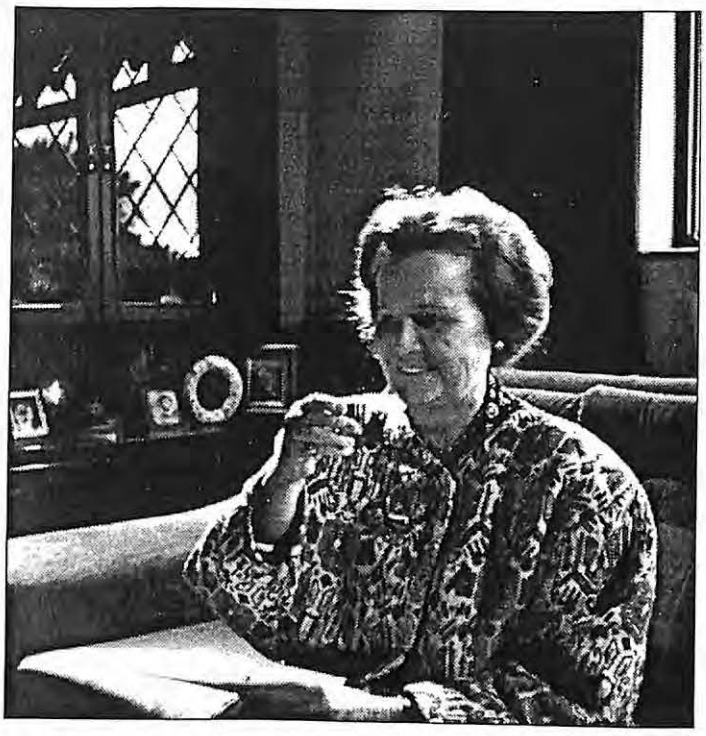
During the summer I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Irene Montjoye, one of the Austrian O'Donell's. She had been lecturing in Bantry at the beginning of July and though this was not her first visit to Ireland, it was, however, her first to Co. Donegal. Her tour of the Castle she found quite enjoyable albeit she felt there was too much talk about the Brookes.

She spent three days in the County during which time she visited the Rosses, Doon Rock, Letterkenny Cathedral(built by Cardinal Patrick O'Donnell), Loch Eske and Rossnowlagh Museum where she was received by Lucius Emerson the curator.

As well as enjoying a visit to her ancestral homeland she also did some research for her forth-coming book on the Irish in Austria. After Christmas, the Countess intends moving to Ireland for about six months to complete her research.

The launch of the book is planned to coincide with Austria receiving the E.C. presidency in July '98 for the first time ever.

The Countess had a very warm welcome for my wife and me when we met at the wedding of Douglas O'Donell in September(see page 5).



The Countess seen here enjoying her first ever taste of Poteen(illicit Irish whisky).

We wish her all the best with her endeavours and look forward to this publication which, undoubtedly, will include some her own ancestors.

Frank O'Donnell

Frank O'Donnell or Frankie Pa(son of the late Pa O'Donnell of Burtonport, Co. Donegal) a long time subscriber to this Newsletter and one of the speakers at the 1989 Clan Gathering(after Mass at Doon Rock, see O'DA No. 10) had the honour this year of being, along with two others, the first ever solicitor in the history of the Republic of Ireland to be appointed as Judge of the Circuit Court. Previously, only Barristers could have this privilege. Frankie has had many distinctions down the years, among them being President of the Incorporate Law Society of Ireland as was his father some twenty years earlier. A profile of this illustrious man appears in this year's '***Donegal Yearbook***'. We wish him all the best in his new position.

*****

Guillermo O'Donnell

Guillermo O'Donnell of Argentina(see O'DA No. 10) who has for the last number of years been lecturing in the University of Nortre Dame, Indiana, U.S.A. and who is a subscriber to this Newsletter, received some accolade at the beginning of this year. I hope I have this right (it was whispered to me by some American visitor during the summer), he was made a member of the Fellowship of Arts and Science Academy. Congratulations Guillermo.

*****

Paddy O'Donnell.

Paddy O'Donnell of Mullaghduff, Co. Donegal is also to be congratulated on becoming Mayor of his native Mullaghduff during the summer. Paddy has always been an active member of the Clan Association. We wish him much success in this high office.

Daniel O'Donnell Honoured

Daniel O'Donnell, that mega-star singer from Kincaslagh, Co. Donegal goes from strength to strength. Tickets for his shows are usually sold out hours after they go on the market anywhere and everywhere all over the world. It's not alone his singing that attracts such crowds but his clean-living image, personality and charisma. Earlier this year he was given a Civic Reception by the Donegal County Council who realise that he attracts more tourists to the area than the Irish Tourist Board. He was also honoured by the O'Donnell Clan Association at a special function held in his own Viking House Hotel. The following excerpts from the papers tell the story.

Donegal Democrat 25th April 1996.

"The director of North West Tourism, Clr. Sean McEniff, informed the packed chamber that since he opened his Viking House Hotel in 1993 almost a quarter of a million people had passed through its doors.

"Of those, 20,000 stayed overnight and only 15% of the guests have been from the Republic of Ireland. The rest have been visitors from Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Europe and beyond. It is a remarkable tribute to the man that over half of the English visitors to the Viking House are on their first visit to the country."

It was a theme echoed by Daniel who in reply said that he considered himself privileged to have assumed the task of bringing people to Donegal. "The hard part is getting them here - but once they've been here its easy; they always return."

They all heard Clr. McEniff tell Daniel that Donegal was proud of him. "He is now an international artist. All 12 of his albums have gone to No. 1 in the British Country Charts. He has collected countless silver and gold disks in Ireland and Britain and Australia and he has sold over 2 million records. But he never forgets his roots."

Donegal Democrat 35thMay 1996

Vincent O'Donnell, chairman Clan Association, Daniel O'Donnell, Ben O'Donnell, secretary Clan Association.

"At a special function in Daniel's own Viking House on Thursday night he was made an honorary life member of the Clan Association.

A specially inscribed frame was presented to Daniel by clan chairman Vincent O'Donnell.

Mr. Ben O'Donnell clan secretary in his address spoke of the famous O'Donnell chieftains who had brought honour to the Clan in the past such as Red Hugh.

"It was fitting," he said, "that the name Daniel had been given to our honoured guest tonight because a number of the great chieftains bore this name."

"There was Donal Mór O Domhnaill chieftain from 1208 to 1241 who was succeeded by his son Donal Og 1258 - '81."

"It was also interesting," he said, "that it was Daniel O'Donnell who brought the 'Cathach', which contained sacred writings attributed to St. Colmcille, to the continent for safe keeping after the overthrow of the O'Donnells by the English in the early 1600's.

He continued, "Our present day O'Donnell has been a great leader also, being a great ambassador for Donegal on the world stage."

In his reply Daniel thanked the Clan Association for the honour they had bestowed upon him.

"I feel a bit guilty," he said, "in accepting the award because unlike the chieftains in the past who did great deeds in battle I myself have never hit anyone in earnest in my life."

The O'Donnell Clan badge was presented to Daniel by Terry O'Donnell, wife of the late Danny Minnie former vice chairman of the Clan Association.

Bouquets of flowers were presented to Daniel's mother by Kathleen O'Donnell, association treasurer, and to Councilor Anne O'Donnell, wife of the late Eddie, former chairman of the association."

Editor's note - The inscription on the scroll presented to Daniel was

"This is to certify that Daniel O'Donnell
Has been made an honoury life member of the O'Donnell Clan Association in appreciation of the honour and dignity he has brought to the O'Donnell name through his success as a singer on the national and international scene."

Henry O'Donnell, again and again.....

On page 5 of Newsletter No. 22 (Autumn '94) appears a clipping from some newspaper recounting yet another of Henry O'Donnell's achievements. Below it I wrote the following - ***"Henry O'Donnell, a subscriber and an active Clan member, has added, yet, another feather to his cap. To date, he has made the army his career but has had many interests and achievements down the years and still goes on. We wish him luck in whatever he's up to next."*** It seems this man can't stop or be stopped.

I quote from the Donegal Democrat 27/6/'96,

"To say that Henry O'Donnell is a remarkable athlete would be an understatement. Competing in a triathlon, a freak accident left him paralysed with a broken neck in 1992.

For any person to suffer such pain must be sheer hell. For a man that had built his life around the pursuit of physical excellence, it must have been torturous in the extreme.

But then, the experts had not dealt with the tenacity that had always been the hallmark of the Donegal man. Henry then began a process that not only had to see him learn how to walk again, but also to learn to speak again.

Recovering from such a horrendous injury, Henry needed inspiration and he got it from a dream that he had since a kid, that of swimming from the Donegal island of Tory over to the mainland of Magheraroarty.

A fit man would have found the prospect intimidating. A man lying in a hospital bed would be foolhardy. But fool he wasn't and hardy he most certainly was.

As the months progressed and his injuries healed, he, with tenaciuos willpower and intensive physiotherapy, set about his dream of completing the Tory Island channel swim.

A marathon in every sense of the word ensued. Nine months of meticulous advance preparation. Physically attuning the mind and body for the swim. Diet, precision swimming training, body circuit training, speed and endurance training along with weeks of research into the psyichology of human discipline, which susc a marathon event demands. In total, 620 hours of physical fitness training.

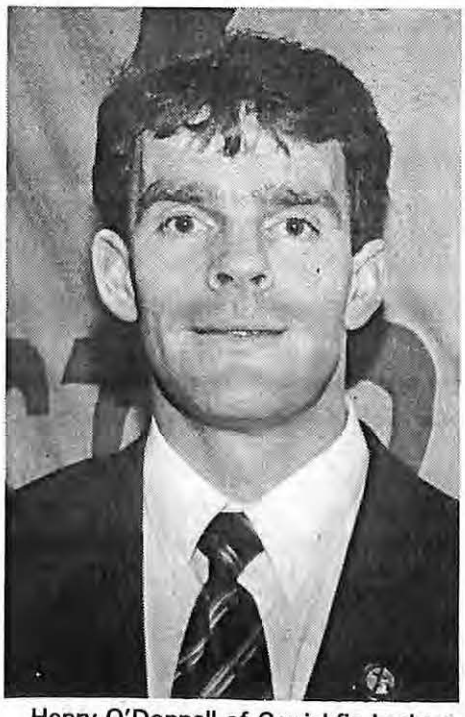
But the sight of the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson on a visit to Tory and who launched the swim gave him that all important boost and 6 hours, 11 minutes and 29 seconds later he entered the history books. A truly remarkable achievement for someone that two years earlier looked as he may never walk again.

Dungloe physician Dr. Patrick Sweeney said of his achievement afterwards, "To have achieved this record in a normal state of fitness would in itself be a remarkable feat. To have achieved it following such extensive damage to his cercival spine and still retain his qualities of humbleness and dignity makes Henry O'Donnell a legend in his own lifetime."

His rehabilitation was fully completed earlier this year when he was selected to compete for Ireland in the World Masters Swimming championships in Sheffield, which begin this week.

Whatever the outcome of his achievements this week, he has already achieved a gold medal winning performance in getting there and is an inspiration to all to all of us in what can be achieved through sheer determination....."

The following is from the Donegal Democrat of the 31/10/'96,



Henry O'Donnell of Carrickfin broke a remarkable 28-year-old record earlier this year when he swam from Tory Island to Magheraroarty in six hours, 11 minutes and 29 seconds. He also represented Ireland in the World Masters Distance Swimming Championships and out of a field of thousands finished 22nd, a sufficiently good position to earn his automatic entry to the next Masters' in 1998.

His achievements are all the more remarkable when one considers that two years ago he was virtually paralysed following a dreadful accident. However, he fought his way back to fitness and success.

Editor's notes -

1. The distance from Tory to the mainland is 9 miles but it was estimated that Henry swam 13 miles due to currents and waves.
2. Henry arrived at the Opening of the 1992 Clan Gathering wearing his 'cage' i.e. a brace supporting his head, neck and arm.
3. Henry has since set up the **PROBE SECURITY NETWORK** offering the following services - Private, Commercial & Industrial Investigators/Security Consultants:Security Risk Management: Security Training Specialists.

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DOUGLAS O'DONELL WEDS

At six o'clock on Saturday morning, 7th Sept. I was awakened from my sleep by what sounded like an explosion downstairs. 'I'm sure it's nothing to be alarmed at,' I thought and went back to sleep. After all I was staying in a strange house on top of a mountain(over 3000 feet above sea level) in Upper Austria with over twenty other people, not to mention over a hundred different species of animals and birds in enclosures and cages in the surrounding fields. Someone once described the house as being like Noah's Ark on top of Mount Ararat with the animals and birds having just been released.

The house, if house it could be called, for it contains two flats, an inn, a museum, numerous rooms, offices and many stairs and corridors. The original building was a hunting lodge belonging to the aristocratic, Uberacker family - one of the fireplaces was a present from the Tsar of Russia. At the turn of the century two O'Donells(a brother and sister) married two members of the same Uberacker family. And today Hochkraut Hunting Lodge is the home of Count Gabriel O'Donell, his wife Ulricke, son Douglas and daughter Elizabeth.

Who are these O'Donells(notice spelling of the surname, it was an error made by the Emperor when granting the title and they held on to it ever since)? Gabriel is the son of Douglas, son of Hugo, son of Maurice, son of Maurice, son of Joseph, son of Henry(who emigrated from Co. Mayo to Austria in 1742), son of Calbhach Dubh(Co. Mayo), son of Hugh(Co. Mayo), son of Calbhach Rua(1st of the family to move to Co. Mayo, thanks to Oliver Cromwell), son of Manus, son of Conn Og, son of Conn, son of Calbhach of Donegal Castle(22nd Chieftain of the O'Donnells from 1563 to '66), brother of Aodh Dubh, Donegal Castle(23rd Chieftain from 1566 to 1592), father of the famous Aodh Rua, last official Chieftain from 1592 till his death in Spain 1602.

This family, regularly visit Donegal and feel it is their ancestral home. Their proudest possession and heirloom is the Patent received by Rory O'Donnell from King James I in 1604. This 4'X3' parchment is kept in a specially designed case and is proudly displayed to all Irish visitors. Another object of interest is the blood-stained glove of Maxmilian O'Donell who saved the Emperor, Franz Joseph I from assassination in 1853. It was for this action that the Austrian O'Donells received the title 'Count'.

An hour later having got up and dressed I was sitting down to breakfast when there were several more loud bangs. I noticed people looking out from an upstairs window at the street below. I did likewise. To my surprise the countryside was white - the first snow of winter had fallen during the night. Then I saw four men firing small cannons. Later I learned that it is traditional in that part of Europe to herald special events in this manner. The special event of this day and the reason myself and my wife were there was the marriage of Count Douglas O'Donell to Countess Aimee Csaky- The Csaky family are Hungarian aristocrats and until earlier this century were the fifth largest land owners in that country. The bride, her family and friends, along with friends of the O'Donells had all stayed at Hochkraut that night, thus accounting for the large number of people about.

The firing went on all morning with startled animals - bison, deer, steinbock, wild boar, yak etc. etc. -looking on as the snow around their feet grew deeper. Annette and I had left a warm 22^{0}C. Ireland the day before. The scene was truly set for a 'White Wedding'.

Mass was at 1 o'clock in the local church with 450 guests present, among them Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill(sister of our Chief) along with her son, Manus and daughter, Aoife. The ceremony was quire similar to that in Ireland. A piper played the couple out of the church after Mass. As the weather was inclement all retired to a nearby castle that was hired for the day. Five large rooms were prepared for the guests with tables of drink - champagne, wine and beer, and all sorts of finger food. People milled about and chatted.

After about three hours the crowd began to disperse. All those staying at Hochkraut made their way back up the hill and within minutes had changed into their working clothes. Everyone including the newly married couple joined in the work. Many of the animals and birds had to be fed. Tables and chairs had to be put in place for the evening meal - 250 were invited.

Tables and exhibits were removed from the museum and it turned in to a dining room.

About 9 o'clock the guests began to arrive, all dressed this time in national costumes. The young were dining upstairs in the museum while the rest were being accommodated down stairs in the restaurant.

The first course was cauliflower soup followed by the main course which was roast bison and boar. This delicious meat was accompanied by sauerkraut, shredded beets and 'Servietten Knodel'. All, of course being washed down with either wine or beer. A table in the bar offered a large variety of desserts along with tea or coffee. All the food served both in the afternoon and in the evening was produced and prepared by the two families.After midnight those who considered themselves energetic enough moved upstairs to the Disco while others said 'Guten Abend' and made their way home.

This really was the third reception. Three days before the wedding a reception was held at Hochkraut for the many staff of the park and all the neighbours. It was a traditional Austrian evening of food, dance and song, and, of course, everyone in national costume.

Next morning all who stayed in the house were up early feeding animals and birds and returning the house to its normal state. On average, 1,400 people visit the park daily to see the many different species of animals and birds, walk the nature trails which include a wonderful display of mushrooms and toadstools, frogs and toads etc. and also the museum.

The O'Donells also have a farm down in the valley along the Danube where they produce most of the feed for the animals and where many of the stock are wintered. Some of the food, such as grain, is packaged in small quantities for sale at the entrance gate. Most visitors entering the park purchase a bag and enjoy feeding the animals, which means that the O'Donells have some of their animals fed freely. So all in all it is a very busy place but apparently a profitable one.

Late on Sunday evening the newly-wedded couple, having promised to visit Donegal next June for the Columban Commemoration, departed for Rome where they intend to spend their Honeymoon. Early the following morning, Annette and I made our way back to 'Sunny Donegal'.

Obituaries

As I've said before, it is always sad to hear of the death of a subscriber and in particular of an O'Donnell who was proud of his name and ancestry.

Tom O'Donnell of Epping, N.S.W., Australia had been a subscriber since the beginning. He wrote me countless letters and with his wife, Dorothea visited Ireland and attended Clan Gatherings.

He died last June at the age of eighty three having had a long and healthy life. He is survived by his wife, Dorothea, and four of a family with whom we sympathise.

Others who died since the last issue were -

Fr. Paddy Gallagher, retired parish priest of Derrygonnelly, Co Fermanagh, a great historian and a subscriber to this newsletter since its beginning.

Arthur Lewis O'Donnell of Lewisham, London

Hannah O'Hara from Sligo who was hale and hearty at the 1992 Clan Gathering.

William O'Donnell, Ards, Creeslough, Co. Donegal.

Go ndeanaidh Dia trocaire ar a n-anamnacha.

DONEGAL CASTLE

"It is, of course, the dream of every O'Donnell that some day it will be fully or partially restored to its former glory." So read the last line of the article entitled, DONEGAL CASTLE which appeared in the very first issue of *'Ó Domhnaill Abú'* Spring 1985.

Well it has finally come to pass. The O'Donnell section of Donegal Castle, after years of restoration, was opened to the public early this summer and on the 29th of July was officially opened by Joan Burton T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs. The following excerpts are from the Donegal Democrat of 1st Aug. '96.

One hundred and fifty people, representatives of local clergy, business, community organisations and various sections of Office of Public Works, gathered on the first floor great banqueting hall of the restored Tower House section of the Castle to hear M.C. Commissioner Dermot Burke, Director National Monuments and Historical Properties, say that Donegal Castle has a special place in the minds and memories of the people of Donegal Town and County and on a national basis it is also a major asset.

He said that the castle provided a splendid focal point for the town and will generally assist tourism in the area.

Minister Burton said, "We celebrate a fascinating building which is so significant to Donegal Town, county and nation. From even a cursory examination of the Castle it is very easy to be highly impressed with its original builders."

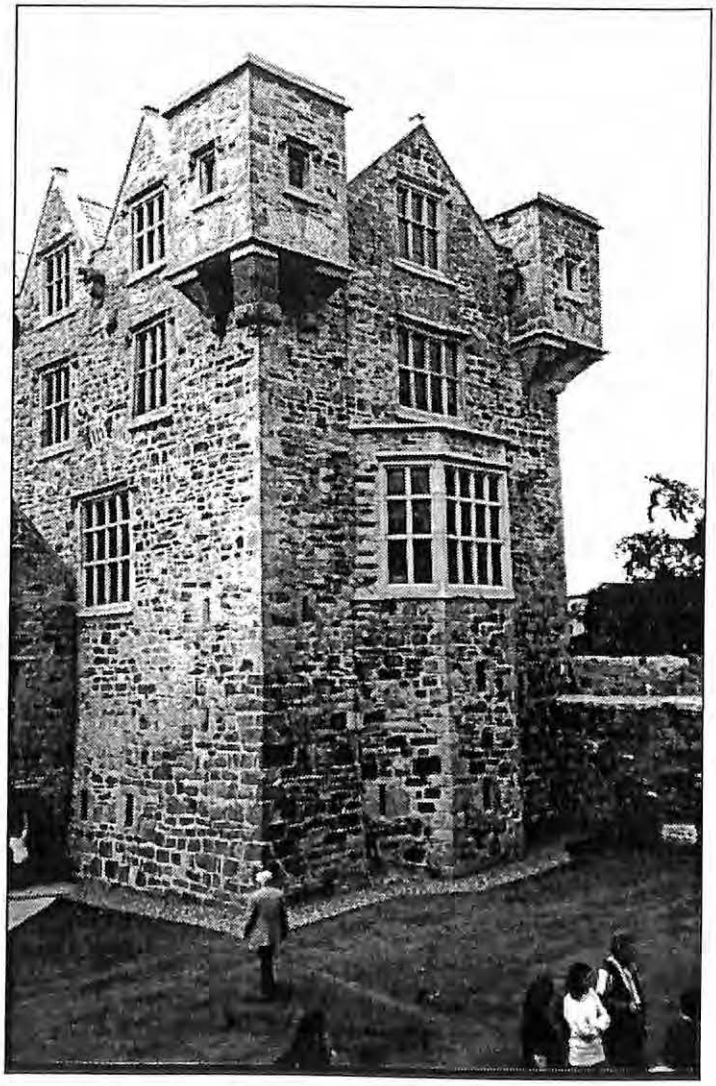
The Minister added: "Having restored the Castle the next task that required attention was to ensure that the experience of visitors to the Castle would be as meaningful which is part of the interpretive programme for which the Castle was commissioned, and designed to highlight the very major aspects of Irish Life and historic monuments. The great tradition of O'Donnell Chieftainship is celebrated in an authentic yet accessible manner."

The Brooke family resided in Donegal Castle until the early 18th century, when eventually it fell into decay and became roofless. Later owner, the Earl of Arran, placed it into the guardianship of the Office of Public Works in 1898. Early restoration work commenced for a brief period in the mid 1930's and then lay dormant for a number of years until the 1980's when work commenced on restoring the Gate House section at a cost of £150,000.

In 1989 work commenced proper on the Tri-partite re-roofing and restoration of the Tower House section which is now estimated to have cost in excess of half a million pounds.

Criticism has recently been levelled against the O.P.W. for their preservation work in "Pebbledashing" the North West outside wall. This was necessary as the original stonework, some of which has stood since 1474 was crumbling into a powder-like substance, eroding areas of the foundation of the Castle.It is believed that over the years the pebbledash work will "weather" and blend into the existing structure. The O.P.W. state that there are no plans at present to re-roof the Manor House.

There are presently five specially trained guides and a caretaker employed in the Castle and it is estimated that since the unofficial opening in mid-June this year over 12,000 people have visited the Castle and exhibition.



One of those guides, Eunan O'Donnell from Ardara, is pursuing an Honours Degree in History and is at present in his fourth and final year. He has, of course, a deep interest in the history of our Clan and was more than helpful to all O'Donnells who visited the Castle during the summer.

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